

Article angers Wycombe

AN ARTICLE in a souvenir programme compiled to mark Hungerford Town's appearance in the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup final two weeks ago, has angered officials of Wycombe Wanderers.

The article was written by Tony Williams, general manager of Hungerford Town, who went down 4-0 to Chesham at Slough. Chesham were beaten by Wycombe in the semi-final of the competition but after a discovery had been made that the Blues fielded an ineligible player, the club requested to withdraw from the competition. The Berks and Bucks F.A. agreed and Chesham went through.

Wycombe, who felt their request to withdraw was the most dignified answer to the problem, thought the matter was then over. But the article looks likely to stir up trouble again.

Mr. Williams, who is also in charge of Rothmans football, wrote the article in a bid to clear up any confusion in the minds of supporters.

He writes: "At the beginning of the season, Graham 'Jock' Mackenzie, a Wycombe Wanderers player, was given permission by his manager Brian Lee to play for us (Hungerford) as he was soon to join St. Paul's College, Cheltenham and was not expected to be available for selection once he attended the Physical Training Establishment.

"Graham played for us in a few league matches and also in the Berks and Bucks match with Maidenhead Town. Whenever he played for us, he did so in the full knowledge of, and with the permission of, Brian Lee. On the occasion of the Maidenhead match, both George Pullin (manager) and I were under the impression that Brian knew the game was a county cup tie and as Graham was unlikely to be available for Wycombe later in the season, it wasn't surprising to us that he was made available for Hungerford.

"Jock played well, and scored, and went off to college. However, when Wycombe Wanderers faced Chesham United in the semi-final of the county cup competition, during a flu epidemic, John Reardon (Wycombe's assistant manager), in charge of the team that weekend in Brian's absence, called Graham up as an emergency selection. Wycombe left out Bruce Macrae, who they knew was cup-tied with Wantage Town, on the sidelines, but Graham played in their 4-2 victory.

"Chesham United did not complain when Wycombe sent in the proposed squad, neither did they appeal within the statutory 48 hours after the match. However, someone brought the matter up and the county wrote to us for confirmation that Graham played for us.

"Wycombe Wanderers wrote to the county F.A. and offered their resignation from the competition. Everyone knew that they hadn't wanted to enter in the first place, but county rules dictated that they had to, and remembering last season's Senior Cup final fiasco, when Thatcham were awarded the cup on default, it wasn't surprising that the Berks and Bucks management committee should accept their resignation.

"We are desperately sorry that we are not going to meet Wycombe Wanderers in the final, and in all probability poor Chesham feel a little embarrassed and uncomfortable about playing after a 2-4 semi-final thrashing."

Mr. Williams' article contradicts several points made by Wycombe Wanderers at the

time. Wycombe boss Brian Lee admits he gave permission for Mackenzie to play for Hungerford during the season but maintains that he was not informed that the Maidenhead game was a Berks and Bucks Senior Cup match.

Mr. Lee also points out that although he was away for the week before the Chesham semi-final, he assisted John Reardon in team selection and actually contacted Mackenzie to play. He was also back from holiday before the Saturday, and was at Chesham for the whole game.

One of the most controversial pieces in Mr. Williams' article is when he states: "Everyone knew that Wycombe Wanderers hadn't wanted to enter in the first place..."

This could imply that Wanderers were trying to withdraw from the competition as an easy way out and that the B and B granted their request to withdraw because of Wycombe's actions in last year's final.

But county secretary Charles Twelftree said at the time that the B. and B. would not be influenced by any previous precedents and would judge the case on its merits.

Tony Williams was shocked when he heard that news of Wycombe's anger this week. He said he wrote the article in a bid to clear up any confusion and hoped to do so in a way to demonstrate that Wycombe had been honest and in no way had tried to cheat.

"I think there has been a misunderstanding between the two managers," he said. "I wrote the article in all good faith and wanted to show that Wycombe had not cheated in any way and that it was an honest mistake.

"The section I wrote that everyone knew Wycombe didn't want to enter the competition was a presumption of most people in the Hungerford area after Wycombe refused the cup last year. But some of us sympathised with the club over the difficulty in gaining entry to the London Senior Cup.

"The article was supposed to be written to show Wanderers in the best of lights, but it seems to have rebounded on us. We are extremely upset that Wycombe are concerned over the article and reiterate that it was written in the best of faith. Obviously the Mackenzie incident was a genuine mistake.

"We at Hungerford have been proud of our association with Wycombe Wanderers in recent years and have admired their achievements in the past."